

The Street Railway.

INTERESTING HEARING BEFORE THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN—THE FUTURE PLANS OF THE BOSTON AND ALBANY COMPANY.

The board of aldermen met in solemn conclave, last evening, to consider the conflict of the two railways, steam and horse, about their meeting at the Main street crossing, or rather, as it proved, whether the latter should be allowed to reach the former at all at present. Pending the appearance of counsel, a little miscellaneous business was done. J. W. McCulloch was granted leave to enter the Bridge street sewer on payment of \$50; and Milton Bradley & Co's petition to enter the Dwight street sewer was appropriately referred. The resignations of certain members of the fire department, and the names of their substitutes, as recommended by the department engineers, were accepted. Then came the hearing.

The street railway was represented by its president, Mr Atwater, a director, Mr Covell, and their attorney, Mr Leonard; the Boston and Albany railroad by President Chapin and Attorney Rumrill. The petition of the street railway company was read, desiring the location of their track, as previously stated. The specification upon which the opposing railroad obtained an injunction, is for laying two tracks from a point 80 feet north of the north line of Liberty street to a point 80 feet south of the south line of Lyman street, in all somewhat more than 500 feet. Mr Leonard briefly explained the advantages to public convenience claimed to be secured by a double track, and produced three witnesses to confirm it, who were all sworn. W. B. Harris, the city engineer, gave the first and most minute testimony. He said that two cars passing at once, would form two currents of travel, the vehicles from each way falling into the wake of each car, and not crossing in confusion from one side to the other. The great difficulty at the crossing now is, that a line of vehicles completely close up the whole width of the street on either side, and when the gates are opened, all rush promiscuously where they get a chance. But, recognizing that when they meet a car they must give way to it, the drivers would take care to keep to the rule of the road behind the car. He described the practical work of this at Causeway street in Boston, where two tracks of the metropolitan horse railway cross those of the Boston and Maine road, as in accordance with these statements. There is more travel there than here, but no confusion at all; the lines of waiting teams clear themselves at once when the gates are opened, and much quicker than here. He said that unless they had two tracks, the alternative is a turn out below, where one waits till the other passes over, and meantime the gates may be closed, so that crossing is impossible. This would tend to block up the street, whereas in the other case the car is one of several vehicles, and passes as quickly as they do. It is the usual practice in Boston to cross steam railroads with a double track. The Causeway street crossing is the most crowded place, and its width hardly varies two feet from that of Main street. The Metropolitan company would not run there at all if they could not have two tracks.

Mr Rumrill put several questions which seemed to start from the idea that the street cars would wait for passengers from the steam cars; on which point Mr Leonard reassured him by saying that the street cars would run strictly on

their own time. Alderman Howard volunteered to assist the Boston and Albany side, and described his visit to the Boston crossing previously referred to. He saw no such lines of procession; saw no two cars pass the crossing at once, saw no confusion saved, and had talked with the gate keeper, and been convinced that there were no advantages about the scheme. Moreover, the street railway there had its terminus not 500 feet from the crossing. But Mr Harris testified that he had lived in Charlestown 15 years, and often went over the road five or six times daily, and Mr Howard's "terminus" was a turn-out track, on which a special car is run down to wait for passengers at the depot, while the main line crosses the bridge to Charlestown. Mr Pettis, the Springfield street railway engineer, who had also been with the Metropolitan, didn't think they could run at all without two tracks, no arrangement of side tracks could make it possible to avoid inconvenience. Deprived of that, a spur and turntable were inevitable, so that there would be in fact two termini, one road north, and one south. Mayor Winchester confirmed Mr Harris's testimony with his own observations at the Causeway street crossing. Mr Atwater stated that the double tracks in Boston were laid by order of the city council, and gave many interesting facts. Questioned by President Chapin, he said that the street cars would not necessarily pass upon the crossing, but that they would on some trips. He thought that the road would be abandoned if they were restricted to one track, whereupon Alderman Howard didn't think it wise to inconvenience the public for a one-horse railroad, a mere little pony railroad, etc.

Mr Rumrill made a well-worded speech, claiming that the Boston and Albany railroad was actuated solely by devotion to the public interests, and making statements which President C. W. Chapin immediately after gave in more detail. Mr Chapin said that the corporation had in prospect extensive alterations which could have no interruption by any lesser schemes. The question of changing the grade at the Main street crossing, either of the railroad or the traveled road, was being agitated. He had now authority to build an iron bridge with a double track across the Connecticut river, and the execution of this project only waits for the problem of the Main street grade. It will involve changes in the passenger and freight depots, in all the tracks, and during these operations Main street at that point will be necessarily impassable. He pictured how horrid it would be if a train should break down, the car be unable to evade it as other vehicles could, a jam, and a train coming in from the east, which could not be stopped. He replied to a question, that the trains do not run slowly enough down grade to be stopped in 300 feet. Mr Leonard asked if these objections did not apply as much to a single track as to a double, and Mr Chapin acknowledged they did. Mr Leonard then pertinently said that the Boston and Albany road virtually propose to indefinitely suspend the progress of the street railway. Mr Chapin said further that he simply desired that the street railway shall be put under conditions where their rights shall not conflict with the mammoth projects of his railroad. He confessed that a single track would give as many privileges as a double track. Mr Leonard proved from the statutes that the law would support Mr Chapin's corporation in all their rights, as against any claims of the horse railroad, when they undertake this work. So the case rested. Alderman Cooley, losing sight of the street railway, proposed to meet Mr Chapin next week and consult on his great plans, but that was overruled, and further discussion of the whole subject was postponed until Monday evening, and the board adjourned till then.